

West Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education
Regular Board Meeting
January 16, 2018

Unofficial Minutes – Pending Approval

Present: Mrs. Blanks, Dr. Greenberg, Mr. Levine, Mr. Pauluk, Ms. Polun, Dr. Thomas-Farquharson, Mr. Zydanowicz, Superintendent Tom Moore, Student Representatives Grace Andrews (Conard) and Madeline Pliskin (Hall)

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance

Students from Florence E. Smith STEM School Lego Robotics Team presented to the Board a slideshow and discussion on their Lego League. The Board thanked the students for all the hard work they did on their presentation and asked questions on what they learned from being a part of this team. Students expressed how much fun it was to be a part of a team that worked together to find solutions.

Student Participation

No Public Comments at this time.

Public Communication

No Unfinished Business at this time.

Unfinished Business

Mrs. Blanks moved and Mr. Zydanowicz seconded:

New Business

THAT the Board of Education receive the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2018-2019 and begin the process of reviewing for final approval at the February 6, 2018 Board of Education Meeting.

Presentation of the Capital Improvement Plan for 2018-2019 (CIP)

Dr. Andrew Morrow, Assistant Superintendent for Administration, reported to the Board on the Capital Improvement Plan for 2018-19. Presenting alongside Dr. Morrow was Mr. Robert Palmer, Director of Plant Services. It was noted that the Proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) will be adopted by the Board at the February 6, 2018 meeting and forwarded to the Town Manager. The proposed plan is available on the website:

<http://www.whps.org/boardofeducation/agenda>. Discussion included highlights of 2017-18 CIP as well as the upcoming building maintenance projects sited for 2018-19 through 2020-21. Questions were asked by the Board on how any unforeseen problems that come up during the year are addressed, and how the needs of the schools are requested and prioritized. In addition, the proposed Board request for funding to study the addition of air conditioning to elementary schools was discussed. Board members shared concerns over the expense of such a project with limited funding and impact, and decided to remove the funding from the 2019-20 to 2029-30 period.

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Motion passed.

Mr. Pauluk moved and Mrs. Blanks seconded:

THAT the Board of Education review and revise as appropriate the proposed annual Board meeting schedule and adopt a final meeting calendar for the 2018-2019 school year.

*Adoption of the Annual
Board meeting schedule
for 2018-2019*

Motion Passed.

Superintendent Tom Moore congratulated Abby Esposito, US History Teacher at Conard, for receiving a grant from the Mohegan Tribe, and also gave thanks to Chalise Ross, ESOL's Townwide Curriculum Specialist, for putting together this year's Variety of Home Languages Report. This year 74 different languages are spoken in homes throughout West Hartford, up from 72 last year.

*Staff Communications
and Reports
Superintendent's Report*

Mr. Paul Vicinus, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, introduced and presented on Teaching Religion in West Hartford. Panel presenters included Ms. Kerry Jones, Director of Elementary Education, Ms. Jessica Blitzer, Townwide Department Supervisor for Social Studies for grades 6-12, and Ms. Ashley Callan, Townwide Elementary Curriculum Specialist for Social Studies and Language Arts.

Teaching Religion

Ms. Jones-provided background information on the two relevant Board of Education policies that inform teaching about religion. Board of Education Policy #6326 Instruction about Religion states that while we "will not promote or advance any particular religion, ... we will provide neutral, objective, curriculum-related instruction regarding the development and influence of the major religions of the world." Board of Education policy #6211 Cultural Diversity states that our "instructional program will value, recognize, and address the needs of all children as well as promote student understanding of and appreciation for cultural and individual differences."

Ms. Jones also shared the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework which outlines the four disciplines of social studies learning: history, geography, civics, and economics. West Hartford educators were core members of the state social studies framework writing team which developed the Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks. While the state social studies frameworks do not offer specific guidance on instruction

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about religion, Ms. Jones highlighted that our Board of Education policy is aligned with widely accepted guidelines for teaching about religion that include an academic non-devotional study about religion that neither promotes nor denigrates religion or conformity to particular beliefs.

Ms. Jessica Blitzer spoke on the professional learning practices in West Hartford related to teaching about religion. She noted that teachers at the secondary level have had the opportunity, along with other districts, to participate in training on how to teach religions in public schools. Ms. Blitzer was one of the authors of the Religious Studies Companion Supplement to the C3 Framework, a new resource developed by the NCSS to inform state educational bodies, districts, schools, and teachers at the high school level as they consider how to teach about religions. Ms. Blitzer explained that West Hartford teachers also played a role this year in drafting a Companion Document for religious studies at elementary and middle school levels. West Hartford middle school curriculum is in process of shifting to the inquiry model of the C3 social studies framework. The Department will determine how to most effectively embed study about religion within social studies courses at the secondary level.

Ms. Ashley Callan spoke on instructional guidance for elementary schools. At the elementary level, social studies curriculum is being revised. This year, fourth and fifth grade curriculum includes lessons for teaching religion integrated with social studies content and aligned with Board of Education policies regarding cultural diversity and religious instruction. K-3 curriculum on teaching religion will be revised over the next year.

The Board thanked the team for the depth of their report and asked questions regarding how information is delivered to families, the training that is provided for teachers on the diversity of religion, and how districts who also participated in training are doing.

Mr. Pauluk moved and Dr. Thomas-Farquharson seconded:

THAT the Board of Education approve the Financial Report for the period ending November 30th, 2017

Motion Passed.

*Routine Matters
Financial Report*

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Mr. Zydanowicz moved and Mrs. Blanks seconded:

*Approval
Of Minutes*

THAT the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Board of Education meeting of December 19, 2017
The motion passed.

Dr. Thomas-Farquharson reported to the Board on the Substance Abuse Prevention program and Take Back Day- a program that teaches the proper ways of disposing medicine. Mrs. Blanks extended CREC's invitation to attend the Legislative Breakfast to be held on February 15th with a snow date of February 22nd. Hall High School's student representative Maddy Pliskin congratulated Amber Raisner who scored her 1,000th point during this evenings Hall High School girls' basketball game. She also reported on the Mr. Hall Pageant Night and Link Crew as well as the upcoming Cocoa and Cram event to help study for exams. Conard High School's student representative Grace Andrews reported to the Board on the third annual Chieftain pasta dinner to be held on February 6th, the upcoming study with a buddy for mid-terms, and a visit from the Tails of Joy with their therapy dogs.

*Information and
Reports*

Dr. Cheryl Greenberg announced the following meeting dates:

*Future Business:
Announcement of
Meeting Dates*

1. Tuesday, February 6, 2018, regular Board of Education meeting, Adoption of the CIP, Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, room 314, Legislative Chamber, 7:00 p.m.
2. Wednesday, February 21, 2018, regular Board of Education meeting, Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, room 314, Legislative Chamber, 7:00 p.m.

No requests for future agenda items at this time.

*Request for future
Agenda Items*

No comments from visitors at this time

*Comments from
Visitors*

Ms. Polun moved and Ms. Blanks seconded:

Adjournment

THAT the Board of Education adjourn at 9:10 p.m.

Motion passed.

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ATTEST:

Dr. Cheryl Greenberg
Chairperson

Mr. Dave Pauluk
Secretary

Respectfully submitted by: Mrs. C. Rogers, Clerk of the Board

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